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Therkelsen, Anette; Halkier, Henrik

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Discussion Paper

No. 26/2004

**UMBRELLA PLACE BRANDING
A STUDY OF FRIENDLY EXOTICISM AND EXOTIC FRIENDLINESS IN
COORDINATED NATIONAL TOURISM AND INVESTMENT
PROMOTION**

by

Anette Therkelsen & Henrik Halkier



SPIRIT

School for Postgraduate
Interdisciplinary Research on
Interculturalism and Transnationality

Aalborg University

Center for International Studies
Aalborg University

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Aalborg University

Fibigerstraede 2

Dk-9220 Aalborg OE, Denmark

Phone + 45 96 35 84 38

Fax + 45 98 15 11 26

<http://www.ihis.aau.dk/spirit>

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on Interculturalism and Transnationality*

Directors: Jean Monnet Professor Staffan Zetterholm & Associate Professor Henrik Halkier

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2. Global Markets and Organisations: Co-operation and Competition
3. Regions, Cultures and Institutional Change
4. International Politics, Ideas and International Change

Umbrella Place Branding

A Study of Friendly Exoticism and Exotic Friendliness in Coordinated National Tourism and Investment Promotion

Anette Therkelsen & Henrik Halkier

1. Introduction

Recent years have witnessed an increasing branding of place - localities, regions, nations - for a variety of purposes: attraction of tourists, attraction of foreign investors, attraction of new residents and students, or simply to increase the public profile vis-à-vis an external or indeed internal public. As a generic phenomenon branding essentially involves the creation of a coherent identity for a given product which brings forward a set of feelings, values and meanings and which, on that basis, leads to identification with the brand on part of the customer (Buhl & Dahl 1993; McDonald & Chernatony 1998). This is a lesson that private businesses have learned and put into practice for several years, and it is therefore hardly surprising that public policy-makers at the national level have emulated these practices in trying to create umbrella brands¹ supporting the vast range of external activities in which any country is engaged. An umbrella brand would seem to offer not only economies of scale or fit the notion of a distinct 'national core' of values, but also to entail the possibilities of synergy when a unified national image is consistently projected to the external world.

Whether such national branding initiatives involving both tourism and business interests are likely to be successful or advantageous is, however, less certain because the characteristics used to brand a particular place now have to serve different purposes at the same time: they must seem exotic to attract tourists and at the same time business-like in order to cater for foreign investors. Thus despite its obvious attraction for public policy-makers, an umbrella brand may either become too heterogeneous (i.e. a non-brand), too bland (appealing to no-one in particular and looking much like most other nations), or too skewed (focusing on the needs of certain activities at the expense of others). Tourism and investment marketing may in other words potentially suffer from becoming part of a unified national brand.

With point of departure in the actors and activities involved, a national brand may essentially be understood as: produced as a set of national images in order to achieve goals such as recognition, goodwill and/or new forms of behaviour within the target group, e.g. consumption of particular goods and services; and consumed by recipients of the branded communication and interpreted according to their specific context, i.e. pre-existing images of both the

¹ The term umbrella brand is used in the branding literature to refer to a brand applied across a range of disparate product categories to create a common set of associations (Keller 2003). Other authors use family brands and range brands to refer to these types of brands.

branded nation and the particular purpose for which closer involvement may be considered. As each actor, producers as well as consumers, is situated not only in a particular national environment but is also part of a particular functional context - e.g. travel or investment - a schematic rendering of the process of national branding could look like Figure 1 which depicts a situation of uncoordinated parallel or fragmented branding of the same place to different audiences for different purposes.

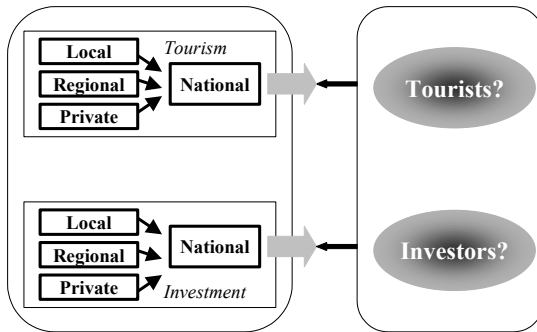


Figure 1
Fragmented international place branding

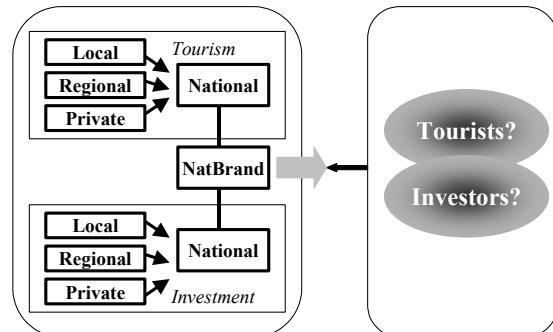


Figure 2
International umbrella place branding

On the other hand, creating a successful umbrella brand would, as illustrated by Figure 2, seem to require: promotion of images that are common to different functional areas (e.g. tourism and investment) and at the same time distinct from those of potential competitors; and extensive cooperation from a large number of organisations, promotional bodies as well as private firms, that individually may want to maximise 'their' preferred images at the expense of the unified brand. A national umbrella brand is, in other words, likely to be complex and contested, both in terms of the images constituting the unified brand, and in terms of ensuring compliance from actors who are actively promoting a particular place for their own purposes.

As the first stage of an ongoing research project, this paper will focus on the interplay between promoters and target groups with particular emphasis on the potential strengths and weaknesses of umbrella branding, and hence for the time being the organisational context and processes through which specific co-branding strategies have emerged (or become defunct) will be backgrounded, both in the conceptual framework and the analysis. Hence the purpose of this paper is to discuss general theoretical and methodological aspects of nation branding and present a preliminary analysis of the conditions for creating a holistic 'Danish brand' encompassing the external promotion of Denmark as a destination for tourism and investment, focusing especially on the conditions under which an umbrella brand may become more effective than its constituent parts and hence a useful tool for these types of place marketing areas. The following research questions will structure the discussions of the paper:

1. What characterises place imagery in view of different functional contexts and do common denominators exist that can facilitate the formulation of a distinct national umbrella brand?
2. In view of Danish tourism and investment promotion, does the basis for a functionally relevant and internationally distinct umbrella brand exist?

The text proceeds as follows: Section 2 outlines the conceptual framework, which takes its point of departure in a review of place branding literature and which highlights features that set place branding apart from product branding. Turning to approaches to cultural studies and discourse analysis, the section proceeds with an identification of key features of images of Others in different functional contexts of international activity, and thereafter develops a method for analysing the way in which these images are established in the communication strategies of place marketers. Section 3 presents an analysis of the internet-based promotion of Denmark in two functional contexts: the tourism promotion undertaken by the Danish Tourist Board (DTB) on its www.visitdenmark.com portal, and the investment promotion undertaken by Invest in Denmark (IDK) on its www.investindk.com portal. Subsequently the results of the two website analyses are compared in order to explore whether synergies can be achieved by adopting a national umbrella brand for the promotion of foreign tourism and investment. Finally, Section 4 sums up the theoretical and empirical contributions of the paper.

2. Conceptual Framework: Organising Images and Functional Otherness

Literature Review

Place marketing has been subjected to substantial scholarly enquiry within recent decades (Ashworth & Voogd 1990; Ashworth 1991; Bennett & Koudelova 2001; Bramwell & Rawding 1996; Echtner & Ritchie 1991, 1993; Gartner 1993; Gunn 1988; Kotler, Asplund, Rein & Haider 1999; Langer 2002; Morgan & Pritchard 1998, 2000, 2003; Morgan, Pritchard, Pride 2003; Ward & Gold 1995), and in the 1990s, undoubtedly as a consequence of its wide-spread usage in product marketing, the concept of branding started to appear in place marketing literature, though there are still relatively few academic articles dealing with brand building for places. This is interesting in view of the fact that a veritable surge of not least European places entering into a branding process has appeared throughout the last decade – places as different as York and Milton Keynes in the west (Hankinson 2001), Croatia in the east (Martinovic 2002), the region of Øresund (i.e. Copenhagen and Malmö) (Pedersen 2004) in the north, and Bilbao (Hannigan 2003) and Barcelona (Kotler et al. 1999) in the south.

Branding activities may essentially be viewed as based on three types of analyses: Scrutinising the *identity* of a place not least on the basis of a dialogue with the multitude of local stakeholders; Understanding the *demand patterns* and *images* of targeted place consumers in relation to the particular place; And identifying the *position* of the place in view of competitors and hence the unique

qualities to be highlighted (Buhl & Dahl 1993).² Whereas traditional place marketing will also include these three types of analyses, the points of departure of traditional place marketing and place branding seem to differ: The starting point of traditional place marketing is the needs and demands of the customer to which the product (i.e. characteristics of the place) is sought adjusted – hence the marketing effort may be said to be created from the *outside-in*. Conversely, in the branding approach the identity of the place is the starting point, and based on discussions of local values, norms and practises in which local actors play a central role, the marketing effort towards external customers are constructed. Being created from the *inside-out* supposedly ensures not only the legitimacy but also the efficiency of the brand, as it will rest on local involvement and feelings of ownership (Olins 1999; Pedersen 2004).

The principle of local participation in place branding processes indicates a certain level of attention among place branding theorists towards the difference existing between branding places and branding conventional products. And as Hankinson (2001) also acknowledges, creating brands in relation to locations is a more complex process than in the case of more mainstream products and services. These points notwithstanding, place brand management rests on the notion that place brands can be build and managed, and as Blichfeldt (2003) points out, it is relevant to question this taken-for-granted assumption. By discussing the specific characteristics of places, attention will subsequently be drawn to the uncontrollable aspects of place branding, and setting the discussion in an umbrella branding context, which involves several sectors as well as numerous potential target groups, makes uncontrollability even more pertinent to contemplate. Hence the subsequent discussion will hopefully show that further theorising on the nature of place branding is needed, also within the focus area of this paper – the image typically held by different place consumers.

Firstly, one significant difference between products and places is that the branding of places involves a multitude of stakeholders and accompanying interests: national, regional and local authorities, private sectors as diverse as hospitality and tourism, information technology and agriculture, as well as the local population at large.³ This is not the case to the same extent for conventional products and services although companies may be based on complex organisational structures involving numerous interests. As pointed out by Kotler et al. (1999), the production of a place brand is based on inter-organisational negotiations and consensus-building among three types of stakeholders – local/regional/national government, the business community and citizens – but as voluntary participation is generally the guiding principle for place branding projects to ensure involvement and ownership, there will always be some private companies, local interest organisations, even public sector institutions that wish to pursue their own strategies, perhaps not least major private companies which have already established strong corporate and product brands. This leaves the

² Note that Buhl and Dahl (1993) deal with branding in general and not branding specifically of places.

³ Certain choices will, of course, be made by brand management as to which private sectors and public actors to include all depending on the type of brand and place consumers aimed at.

place brand difficult to control as conflicting messages about the place may be submitted by actors located at the place but not involved in the branding process.

Secondly, having identified the local population as a central stakeholder in the branding process - retention of a skilled labour force and good tax-payers as well as gaining support from actors constituting an integral part of the place product is naturally essential - the question is how their highly diverse interests are included in the branding process because a brand that becomes focused on one type of values clearly runs the risk of alienating large parts of the population. As Mommaas (2002) points out in relation to city branding:

City brands which reflect only the cleaned up "croissant and cappuccino" urbanity of a rising urban middle class will not be in unison with the true existing living conditions of larger parts of the urban population. They will, in the worst case, actively oppose the branding strategy and the associated restructuring policy, with the consequence that city authorities may achieve the opposite of what they set out to' (p.42).

True as it might be from a local identity perspective, this point, however, runs counter to conventional marketing wisdom which holds that in the information-overloaded global market place simple, uniform messages stand a better chance of grabbing the potential customers' attention than complex, disconnected ones. Combining identity and marketing-related interests may hence prove a difficult task, and the local population may turn out to be highly uncontrollable not adhering to the beautifully formulated vision and values of the brand management, basically because they cannot recognise themselves in the brand.

Thirdly, turning to the demand side, although place images can be changed through promotion, the success or otherwise of branding efforts will depend on the response of the target group, and this in turn depends on the images they already hold. In this respect places are also different from conventional products because places generally have an identity and an image prior to the marketing event, though certain places on certain markets will draw a complete blank. That is, places derive part of their meaning from the different historical and present ties that exist between cultures, i.e. between the culture of the potential tourist or investor and that of the place on sale, and it is through this prism and that of the concrete communication effort that the locality gains its meaning to the potential consumer (Therkelsen 1999). These a priori or organic images as Gunn (1988) terms them, are based on information from non-commercial sources including the media in general, popular culture and the educational system which means that information about historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors is part of the image people possess of a given place. Also word-of-mouth narratives from well-travelled friends or experienced colleagues may be part of the organic image. The presence of these organic images clearly leaves the communication effort far more difficult to control in the case of place branding than in the case of product branding where, despite the general importance of cultural factors for the interpretation of promotional materials, the producing company has a greater say in the meaning production surrounding its products.

Fourthly, and also relating to demand, umbrella branding targets many different customers with widely different needs and demands which is unique in

comparison with conventional product branding: Investors will for instance be oriented towards the qualifications and costs of the labour force at the place, taxation regulations, bureaucratic procedures and business climate; Potential residents will likewise be oriented towards the labour market and taxation but perhaps be equally concerned with social welfare, attractive housing and cultural offers; And tourists will be mainly interested in recreational offers and/or experiences to be had at the place, though price level and standard of accommodation will also play a role.⁴ Though this brief outline of the demand patterns shows certain commonalities, there is more that divides than unites these different place consumers, and the question is whether the lowest common denominator is the path to follow for the place brand management or whether certain target groups are to be given higher priority than others.

Being the centre of attention of the present paper, the subsequent discussion will look into different demand factors and focus its attention on the images typically held by different place consumers and evaluate its consequences for umbrella branding efforts.

Imagining National Places in Different Functional Contexts

This section discusses how places are put to different uses simultaneously by different types of users, and how places conjure up different sets of images according to the given functional contexts in which they are used. Hence the focus is here on the imaginary universe of the potentially active subject - be it the investor or the tourist - which will influence the way in which the promotional efforts are received because, it is argued, different functional contexts involve different qualities being ascribed to the national Other.

The way in which other places and people are imagined may be described as relational and dichotomous: on the one hand containing an 'us' pole which is the point of departure identity-wise of the image holders, on the other hand a 'not-us' or 'them' pole which acquires meaning in the light of 'us'. Thereby the Others acquire meaning by being placed in opposition to 'ourselves' and may in this way be said to be transposed images of 'us'. Hedetoft (1990) and Therkelsen (1999) operate with three types of Other images: a hostile, a friendly and an exotic Other image. On the one hand, each of these three has its primary affiliation with a specific functional context, and on the other hand they all belong to the overall national image of a given place and therefore have the potential of feeding into one another. Before illustrating this visually, details on the three types of Other images will be outlined.

In its purest form the *hostile image* of the Other is absolute in that 'they' are perceived as incompatible with 'us', and especially in times of war these images exist because the Other constitutes a very tangible threat against our nation and

⁴ It should, of course, be borne in mind that places will operate with different designated target groups of investors (e.g. medico-industry and mobile telephone technology), residents (people qualified to work within these sectors) and tourists (e.g. empty nesters age 50+ of medium/high income) depending on their comparative advantages, market developments and other strategic considerations. This point notwithstanding, umbrella branding efforts still have to accommodate a multitude of demands.

culture.⁵ Furthermore, the immoral and hostile traits ascribed to these Others also function as the justification of a hostile attitude towards and treatment of them. Concomitantly with increasing international interaction and not least mutual dependency, hostile images of Others have, at least in official peacetime discourse, been replaced by more friendly ones, but this does not mean that hostile images of other people and cultures have ceased to exist, only that they are not *comme il faut* in the official discourse. Internally among members of a given culture they still exist, perhaps camouflaged in irony and humour but nonetheless with a certain bearing on people's views of non-members of their culture. This, furthermore, indicates that hostile images may exist in other versions than its purest form - strong aversions or just negative attitudes may characterise the way in which the incompatible Other is viewed, and particularly if the hostile imagery is drawn from bygone times humour and irony enter the perceptual universe. For instance the Vikings have become synonymous with Danes among many foreign nationalities – an identity that off-hand conjures up connotations of ravage, plunder and brutality - but because of its sheer age the Viking image has lost most of its hostile content and has become the object of humorous portrayals of Danes with only a minor hostile edge.

In the context of place marketing hostile imagery on part of the potential investor or tourist is basically not a discourse that is useful in the promotional efforts. Bearing the above discussion in mind, a number of 'safe' hostile images seem, however, to exist, which can and is exploited in place profiling – hostile images of ancient times which have lost their threatening thrust - and when presented in a humorous tone they potentially have an eye-catching effect.

Friendly images of other people and places belong to the discourse of international politics and diplomacy and is used for establishing and maintaining friendly relations between different nations and cultures. 'They are like us' is the basic tone of this Other image and rests on a notion of compatibility between 'us' and 'them'. Apart from being an official discourse with a designated purpose, friendly images of other places also exist in the population at large not least as a consequence of the increasing globalisation and international contact people engage in. The information flow that people, at least in the western world, are exposed to generally makes other places and people less threatening, as with information follows a degree of insight and understanding, though it should be stressed that a sense of compatibility is likely not to materialise in case of 'us' and 'them' having highly different values and worldviews. In relation to place marketing, stressing 'like-us' aspects seems highly useful when trying to attract new investors or residents as a modern image appears to be a prerequisite for establishing a place as an attractive investment and/or residential area. More specifically a useful friendly image entails the presence of business procedures, occupational opportunities, societal structures, residential facilities, and spare time activities that are comparable with that at home for the potential investor – aspects which all belong to an everyday context. But clearly in a marketing

⁵ The rhetoric of George W. Bush in the aftermath of September 11 and during and after the war against Iraq, where terms like 'axes of evil' and 'villains' are repeatedly put to use, clearly shows that hostile imagery is still being employed.

situation a place must possess some clear advantages compared to home which makes the place worthwhile moving to or investing in. In a tourism context, it does not, however, seem to be friendly imagery that has the primary appeal: Whereas like-home facilities and services, e.g. modern accommodation and reliable transportation, may be looked upon favourably and seen as indispensable prerequisites for some tourists, these are not what generally attract tourists to a given destination – experiences have the main pull effect and these basically have to contain an element of extraordinariness and with that exoticism to possess touristic appeal (Urry 1990, Therkelsen 1999).

Having an *exotic image* of another place and people entails ascribing romantic, seductive, fascinating, in short positive characteristics to these and is founded on a wish to identify with and become part of the Other. This wish for identification seems, however, to exist outside the sphere of every-day life, for example in relation to tourist travel, as the Other in this context is seen as a useful resort - a compensation for lacks in the daily life. Exotic images of other people and places are in a sense manifestations of people's penchant towards escapism – 'they' are bestowed with characteristics which 'we' as modern people believe to have lost: purity, honesty and a straightforward way of living. Thus 'they' are ascribed a kind of utility value which may regenerate some ideal but lost characteristics of our lives. Even though alienation from modern, industrialised or post-industrialised society seems to be inherent in exotic imagery, this does not mean that the only places and people capable of conjuring up exotic images are developing, third world countries. Modern societies may have the same potential if focus is directed at the history, nature, past and present customs and traditions of these places - the latter suggesting a kind of coherence and unity in the culture. Hence, it seems plausible to talk about different degrees of exoticism, ranging from pure exoticism in relation to unknown and highly different (i.e. non-western) cultures, which may, indeed, be attractive because they have a dangerous and with that a hostile tinge, to semi-exotic cultures which in their heritage, mentality and/or present day customs appear to be out of the ordinary but in relation to aspects like societal structure and political system are quite alike the culture of the image holder.

Exotic imagery is clearly useful in the marketing of places as tourism destinations given the out of the ordinary characteristic of holidays. The question is, however, how useful they are in relation to other functional contexts like investments as these centre on every-day, work-related matters. The idea of different degrees of exoticism could, however, open up the possibility that friendly and exotic images may coexist, even overlap. More about this below.

Table 1 Three Types of Other Images

	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
<i>Alike</i>	Friendly	?
<i>Different</i>	Exotic	Hostile

To sum up the above discussions, it is possible to visualise the three types of Other images in the manner illustrated by Table 1 – the horizontal dimension illustrates the valorisation of the image and the vertical dimension illustrates the degree to which the Other is perceived as similar to or different from the Self (i.e. the image holder). The dotted lines between the three categories signify a potential for overlap, which means that the same associative cognitive elements may be interpreted in several ways. This means that exotic images may contain slight elements of danger and fear but no more than the Other remains attractive and fascinating. Exotic images based on the attractiveness of danger, however, possess a potential liability to place marketing in that they may tip over, resulting in the danger element overshadowing attractiveness. Friendly and exotic images may also slide into one another, for instance when exotic features are envisaged within quite familiar societal set-ups (e.g. when one (Northern-)European imagines another (Northern-)European). In line with prior discussions, the overlap between exotic and friendly discourses on Otherness may also be related to facilities/services on the one hand and experiences on the other hand: High standard facilities and services are of main concern to investors, preferably in an improved version of that which is available at home. Some of these facilities and services (good accommodation, reliable infrastructure, service-minded locals) are also appreciated by tourists but are generally of secondary concern, whereas extraordinary or exotic experiences are key pull factors among tourists.⁶ Conversely, these only hold a secondary position among investors – they are interesting extras provided they do not interfere with day-to-day business activities. Hence the same factors and accompanying discourses may be of relevance to both investors and tourists, but they appear to be prioritised differently, and whereas this opens up the possibility for umbrella branding, the common discourse elements of the two functional contexts should still be accentuated differently to the two different target groups.

To illustrate these points by means of a concrete example, a cognitive network diagram⁷ is offered in Figure 3 which sketches Danish perceptions of Thailand as they relate to different functional contexts. The figure not only suggests that connotations may differ between areas of social activities (i.e. tourism, investment and politics) but also that meaning components may be linked across functional areas through chains of association and spill-overs brought about by the omnipresence of particular strong images, e.g. terrorism as a deterrent to potential tourists and investors. For some consumers functional contexts will interact substantially – in the case of politically conscious consumers and organisations, the political actions of a given country will influence both private touristic choices and professional investments. For other consumers the different functional contexts and their accompanying imagery basically live separate lives in the sense that for instance the atrocities of a given political system have no impact on the way in which the place is conceived as a holiday destination.

⁶ In view of the terrorism threats that have come to characterise the world in recent years, it may, however, be that the extraordinariness and exoticism that tourists seek have changed, so that which is different is sought on not-too-unfamiliar, perhaps even domestic, locations.

⁷ On cognitive networks in a marketing context see Djursaa *et al.* 1991, Niss 1994 and Therkelsen 1999.

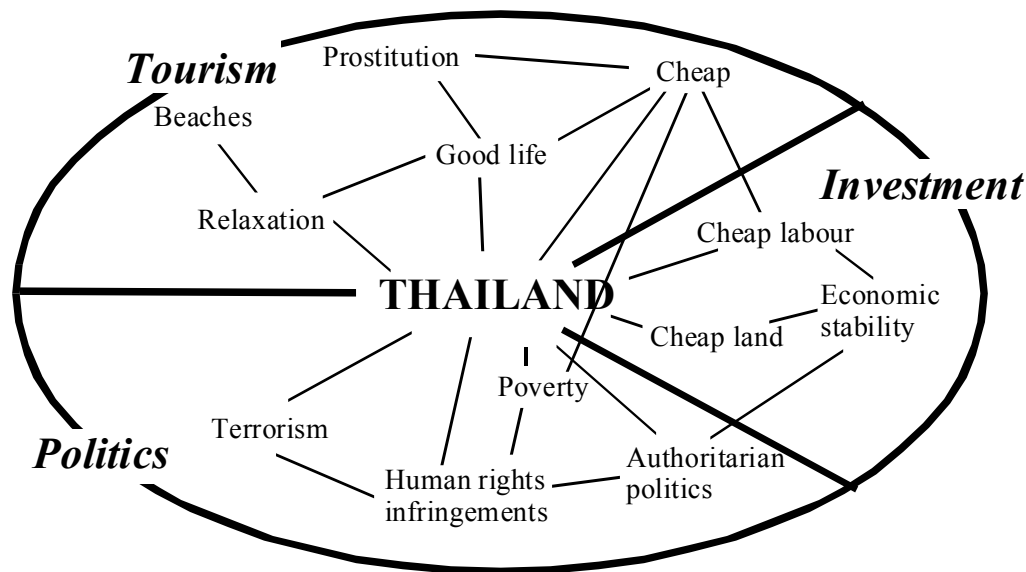


Figure 3 An example of functional components of national image

The discussions so far point to some of the difficulties in establishing an all-inclusive brand for a place as people seem to relate to places in a different manner depending on the situation at hand. On the other hand, even though one type of imagery seems to prevail within one type of context – tourism-exotic, investment-friendly - the discussions also suggest that image overlaps occur between the two contexts with regard to the elements drawn upon, something which paves the ways for co-branding initiatives. Hence in the case of national branding a number of discourses surround a given place, discourses which have different valorisations but still to some extent common denominators, as illustrated by Figure 4.

While branding efforts aimed at only one target group can concentrate on identifying which image denominators to utilise (friendly *or* exotic ones) and which to avoid, actively counter or use with the outmost care (hostile ones), cross-sectoral umbrella branding initiatives are more complicated because they have to rely primarily on words and concepts that carry *both* friendly *and* exotic connotations, bearing in mind that friendly imagery is of primary importance to investors but secondary to tourists and conversely exotic imagery is of primary importance to tourists but secondary to investors. Moreover, while catering for the different interests of two functional contexts, a common branding platform

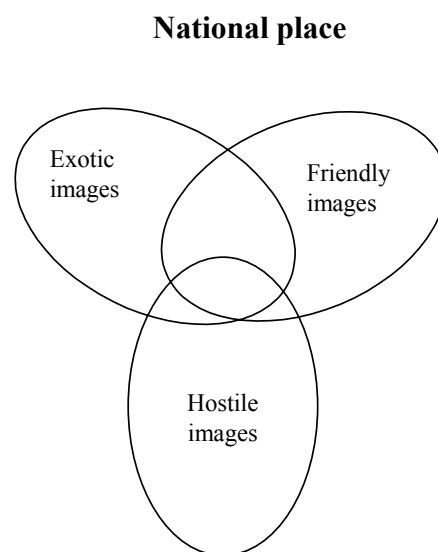


Figure 4

Functional discourses of national place

should result in a brand that is stronger and more conspicuous in order to justify the efforts of umbrella branding. After all the *raison d'être* of branding efforts is to outgun other places and to make the place in question the obvious choice of future investors and tourists.

Instrumental Images: Assumptional Orders in Place Promotion

What is a very real practical difficulty for place promoters is also an analytical challenge when trying to assess the precondition for the development of - or evaluating existing ventures in - national umbrella brands. In order to account for the production of unified place brands and, indeed, the promotion materials themselves, we need an analytical framework capable of establishing both the key cognitive elements and their valorisation in a systematic fashion, especially because cross-sectoral umbrella branding draws on the fact that some meaning components lend themselves readily to more than one interpretation.

Inspired by the work of Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen (1994, Andersen & Kjær 1996) and Reinhart Koselleck (1987, 1990), and drawing on earlier work along these lines (Therkelsen 1999, Halkier 2003), it is argued that any organisation embodies explicit or implicit assumptions about the world, and this is of course of particular interest in situations where an organisation attempts to influence other actors by promoting specific images through strategic communication. Moreover, these assumptions can be grouped into three assumptional orders containing a series of dichotomies which function as lines of orientation in terms of space, time and agency:⁸

- C *operational*, an 'agency mapping' that ascribes roles to actors and things such as subject/object and assistant/adversary,
- C *temporal*, a 'historical mapping' that defines directions of change and causal relations, and
- C *topographical*, a 'social mapping' that identifies collectivities (us/them) and the way they are organised.

All three assumptional orders combine cognitive and normative aspects: while they involve perceptions of distinctions within the external world, they can also ascribe values in that they designate good and bad, friends and foes, and more or less desirable directions of change. The assumptions communicated or embodied by a particular organisation can be more or less distinct, more or less explicit, more or less coherent, more or less ambiguous - and in our case ultimately they are of course subject to members of the target group interpreting promotional materials on the basis of their perceptions of a particular country and specific international activities.

From this perspective the analytical task will be to establish the ways in which promotional efforts position themselves in relation to these *general* assumptional orders, i.e. what *specific* criteria are used to distinguish between e.g. 'us' and 'them'. Although some of the dimensions may be more conspicuous

⁸ For a detailed discussion, see Halkier 2003.

than others in particular contexts, all of the assumptional orders are likely to be present at least implicitly in place branding activities, and hence the six dichotomies can be used as a means to identify key assumptions entailed in e.g. promotional materials, as illustrated by Table 2. With regard to *operational assumptions*, the basic pattern is likely to be a variation on the theme “come over, you’ll love it and I’ll give you a hand”: the prospective tourist/investor will appear as the active subject and the object of desire is the place being promoted while the promoter is in the role of the willing assistant helping to overcome difficulties encountered on the spatial quest. In practice the distribution of roles entailed in the abstract proposition is, however, unlikely to have

Table 2 Assumptional orders in place branding

<i>Assumptional orders</i>	<i>Dichotomies</i>	<i>Place branding application</i>
Operational	Subject/object	Who is to act, what objects of desire
	Assistant/adversary	Who assists, who gets in the way
Temporal	Past/future	Past track record, promises for the future
	Cause/consequence	Causal relations in field of activity
Topographical	In/out	Distinctiveness of the territorial self
	Up/down	Nature of social hierarchies

much persuasive effect unless it is situated in a specific context, i.e. specific assumptions are being made about the nature of the subject - e.g. adventurous tourist or innovative business executive - and key characteristics of the place to be consumed, e.g. exotic jungle or efficient infrastructure. Similarly, the role of assistant may be more or less conspicuous and complex, ranging from being the discreet provider of information to being foregrounded as a complex network of agencies ready to help, while the role of adversary can either be explicit hinted at in connection with the difficulties that must be overcome, e.g. scarce information in foreign languages or complex procedures involved in acquiring property, or be implicitly present as competing destinations for e.g. tourism or investment. Also the *temporal assumptions* will generally take the form of promises about the future and indications of how to reach ‘the promised land’ backed up by references to past successes, but again showing why and how the current state of separation between the addressee and this most desirable place should be overcome. This will involve specific characteristics of the given place, e.g. the possibilities for ‘getting away from it all’ to warmer and more exciting surroundings, or the presence of a highly-skilled workforce coupled with the fact that Siemens and Motorola have already been located in the region. *Topographical assumptions* are obviously crucial in place promotion because they focus on what sets the promoted place apart from other places, i.e. its more or less unique ‘selling points’ *vis-à-vis* the place in which promotion is undertaken and other places promoting themselves as desirable for similar

activities. Claims of “unique attractiveness” also need fleshing out in order to be convincing, and hence assumptions will be made about what constitutes the distinctiveness of the territorial self, drawing on both physical attributes and the ‘spirit’ of the place being promoted, as well as the nature of social relations which visitors may encounter during their stay, e.g. the exotic mystique of locals living far from the heftics of metropolis or the friendly efficiency of informal ways of conducting business.

As illustrated by the examples used in the preceding paragraph, the assumptional orders and dichotomies are sets of analytical dimensions which taken together can be used to characterise a promotional message with regard to the way in which it tries to portray a particular place in relation to its target audience in order to create friendly and/or exotic images that appeals to tourists and/or investors. This also implies that when applied in empirical analysis the same feature of the text may be central to several dichotomies: when Denmark is proclaimed a ‘fairy-tale country’ then a particular geographical object is at the same time designated as the object of desire, the future destination of the addressee, and exotically different from the hum-drum reality of every-day life.

Analysing promotional material used on the basis of assumptional orders would in other words seem to make it possible to identify key cognitive elements of the imagery and their valorisation. In the specific context of trying to assess the potential for developing a Danish umbrella brand, our starting point will be the images of the object of desire which in combination with the other dichotomies should enable us to identify the assumptions about the subject being addressed, assumptions which can then be evaluated in the light of their positioning of Denmark as exotic or friendly, the extent to which they manage at the same time to appeal to both incoming investors and tourists *and* to differentiate the place from its competitors.

3. Images of Denmark

In this section images of Denmark projected towards the external world are analysed on the basis of two national promotional websites aimed at investors and tourists respectively. By investigating the underlying assumptions about Denmark when establishing its attractiveness in two specific functional contexts, the basis for developing a national umbrella brand can be assessed. The analyses focus on the opening pages of the two web-sites: www.investindk.com and www.visitdenmark.com⁹ and not on the websites in their totality – a choice made not just for the sake of dealing with manageable and delimited data, but also because in their attempt to catch the attention of the potential tourist or investor, the opening pages would be an obvious choice for letting functionally specific as well as more general place imagery come into play.

⁹ Website information BM_1_ was collected in November 2003, but the same designs are still being used at the time of writing.

Denmark for Investors

Invest in Denmark (IDK) is the promotional arm of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for attraction of investment from abroad. The services provided by IDK are on the one hand general promotion of Denmark as an investment location through its website, publications, seminars abroad and contact to individual firms, and on the other hand provision of specific information to individual firms including identification of suitable partners for foreign and Danish firms, and support for incoming investors in their dealings with public authorities in Denmark.¹⁰

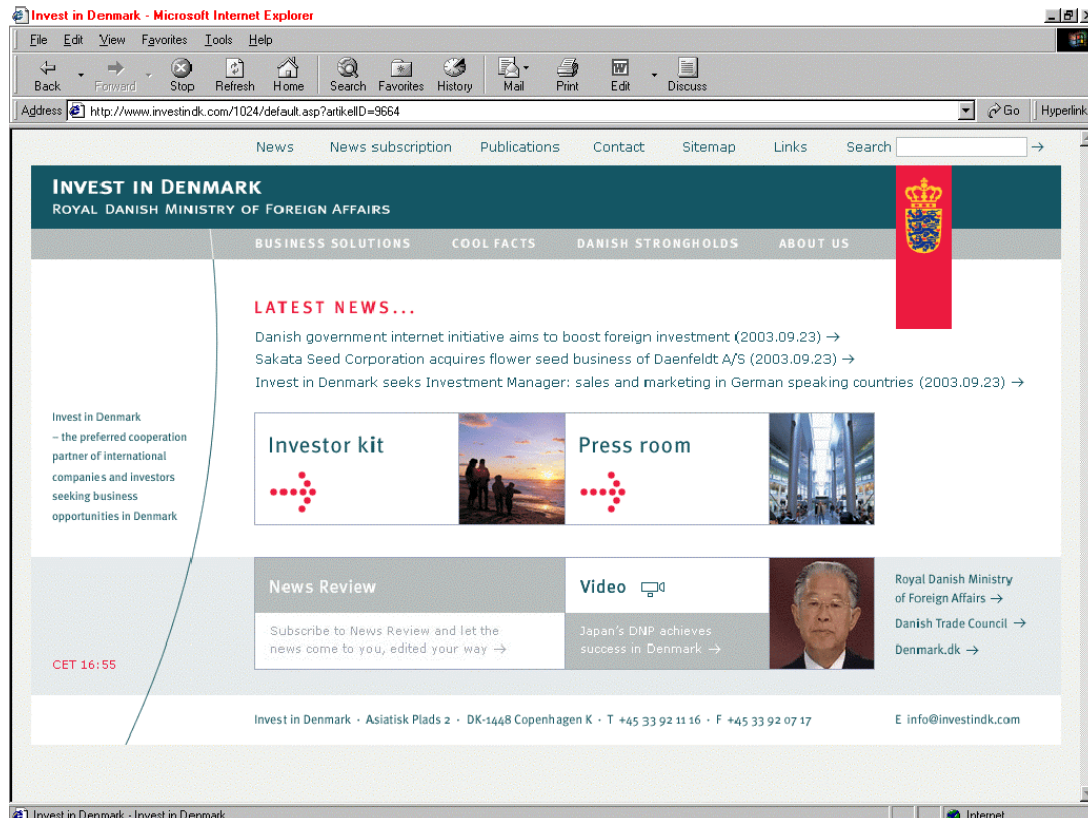


Figure 5 IDK homepage, November 2003

As illustrated by Figure 5, the IDK website consists of four elements in addition to the navigational tools:

- C information about the sender, including mission statement, contact information and the official state seal with lions and crown,
- C links to news items about firms which have located successfully in Denmark, including a short video clip,
- C an ‘investor kit’ which allows prospective investors to compare Denmark to other possible investment locations, and
- C eight alternating pairs of pictures which change whenever the page is loaded, i.e. a casual viewer may only see two out of sixteen possible images.

¹⁰ For an analysis of the strategies of IDK, see Halkier, Helinska-Hughes & Hughes 2003.

Turning first to the textual elements of the home page, the operational assumptions are immediately established when IDK describes itself as “the preferred cooperation partner of international companies and investors seeking business in Denmark”. In taking on the role of the assistant to potential foreign investors, the credibility of the organisation is being supported by the combined prominence of the official state seal denoting public authority, and the news items and foreign investor testimonials which signal support from private-sector actors. Moreover, the potential foreign investor is clearly cast in the role of the active subject through the prominence of the ‘investor kit’ which is essentially a bench-mark feature making it possible to compare Denmark against other international investment destinations on more than 40 criteria. The credibility of the information is enhanced by the fact that many of the comparisons are based on research undertaken by international organisations or consultancy firms and not all of them have Denmark in the lead,¹¹ but apart from signalling transparency through the explicit foregrounding of adversaries in the form of alternative locations, the investor-kit feature would also seem to suggest a ‘let’s-get-straight-down-business attitude’ on part of IDK as the sender, and, indeed, the presumption that the main concern of the addressee is to get ‘cool facts’ they themselves can evaluate.

While the key topographical assumption conveyed by the text seems to be ‘Professional Denmark’, a land where business can be done in an uncomplicated and transparent way, this message is both reinforced and complemented by the visual elements of the home page. As illustrated by Figure 6, the imagery used can be grouped under five headings:

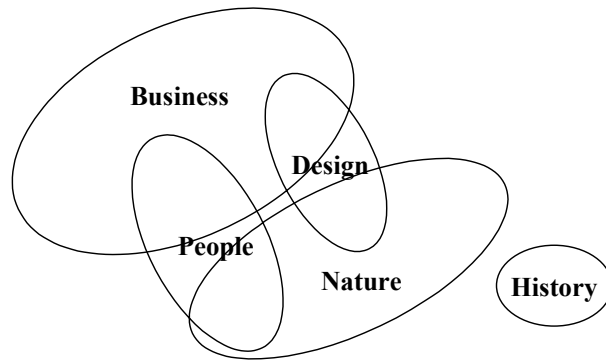


Figure 6 Visual themes in the DTB homepage, November 2003. The overlapping circles illustrate that two thematic elements characterize a given photograph and the size of the circles signifies the frequency with which a given theme occurs visually.

- C business activities or settings (meetings, office locations)
- C design (modern infrastructure and buildings, research & development, high-tech)
- C people (meetings, relaxation, family)
- C history (Copenhagen townscapes)
- C naturescapes (sea, undulating fields)

¹¹ It is interesting to note that, like the vast majority of the pages on this site, the issues addressed are predominantly of a technical nature, either as straight-forward comparisons between e.g. living costs in various countries or in the form of surveys of the perceptions of international business managers.

As all persons and most objects are placed in specific settings, some pictures combine two types of imagery, but all in all it is evident that the visual elements highlight two contexts in particular. On the one hand two themes, business and design, focus on the core interests of prospective investors in that they portray Denmark as a high-tech, 'intelligent' location for knowledge-based activities with a business culture that conforms to the ideals of the modern Western world. Nonetheless, this emphasis on conforming to international standards coexists with more distinct images that appear to characterise the Danish business environment both as less formal - no suits in sight but tie *or* jacket for men - and as having women in prominent positions around the negotiating table, and while these characteristics are hardly unique to the Danish context, their invocation still differentiates the location from more traditional, formal and male-dominated settings. On the other hand, the nature and history themes are also prominent, presumably because another consideration for potential foreign investors is likely to be the quality of life for managers stationed abroad. Complementing the modern nature of the business environment depicted, these pictures present Denmark as a combination of wide-open spaces and a historic urban setting, something which suggests that it would be possible to combine an expatriate life in business with easy access to natural and cultural attractions. In order to assess the visual image of Denmark being communicated by IDK, it is, however, also important to stress elements which are conspicuous by their absence: the business theme does not include any allusions to industrial production (although high-tech facilities often produce spectacular close-ups), the built environment has a distinctly non-metropolitan look (no skyscrapers in sight), and local inhabitants are not used as a selling point (no bustling cafes or public spaces) because the pictures overwhelmingly use people as figures of identification, individuals in the contexts of work and family.

The analysis of Denmark for investors as presented by IDK has shown that the home page is dominated by two types of topographical assumptions related to the contexts of business and everyday life respectively. Given the investment promotion remit of the organisation it is hardly surprising that the primary message concerns the business context, and here a friendly discourse prevails with the distinctive features being the focus on functional excellence in knowledge-based activities - Denmark is "alike but better" - and the prominence of an informal and gender-inclusive business-culture. A conspicuous secondary message characterises the broader life context which expatriate managers would encounter in Denmark as a combination of modern (design) and cultured (European history) urbanity, set in spacious surroundings of open land and sea. By managers based outside Europe and/or in congested metropolitan areas, this could be interpreted as semi-exotic in the sense that while difference is signalled, it is still given a positive and non-threatening spin.

Denmark for Tourists

The Danish Tourist Board (DTB) is the national organisation for tourism promotion and development, responsible for marketing Denmark towards foreign as well as domestic markets in cooperation with other public (local and regional)

and private tourism actors. The activities of DTB include gathering information and knowledge about markets and making it accessible to tourism trade partners, initiating development projects and launching marketing campaigns for the tourism trade to join. Apart from the domestic market, the main markets of DTB are Sweden, Norway, Germany, Great Britain, Benelux, Finland, Italy, USA and Japan with a special focus on the near markets.¹²

As shown in Figure 7, the opening page of DTB's commercial website is divided into three horizontal parts:

- C an identification of the sender as an official national tourism agency established through the title of the website as well as the national flag-like logo. A cavalcade of photographs – 26 pictures which alternate in random order when clicked upon – accompany this text,
- C a display of 12 different flags and country names which offers the reader the possibility of choosing a relevant language version of the website,
- C and a text-rich part which mainly functions as a guide to how the website may be used.



Figure 7 The DTB homepage, November 2003

The first part of the text casts the DTB in the role as a trustworthy as well as welcoming assistant to potential tourists by means of the word 'official' as well as the national flag-like, heart-shaped logo. Furthermore, the agency of the

¹² www.danskturisme.dk. As the target groups in terms of socio-demographic and lifestyle related characteristics vary according to the geographical market in question and the region of the country promoted, this might explain why the DTB does not identify their target groups along these characteristics.

potential tourist is clearly foregrounded in the second and third part of the text - in the encouragement to choose a relevant language version of the website and in the invitation to freely collect information and on that basis put together one's own individual holiday.¹³ Whereas the text envisages an individually oriented and experienced tourist as its target group, the text also communicates an understanding of the tourist as being primarily concerned with the practical planning of the holiday rather than its experience-based content which results in an every-day discourse on something which is ideally out of the ordinary.¹⁴

The third part of the text also includes a catchphrase, which, taken out of context, has the qualities of a slogan, but due to its minuscule size as well as position on the website, it is not presented as a slogan. '*Denmark. An oasis in Europe*' communicates exoticism (oasis) within, what to most Denmark-oriented tourists is, a familiar context (Europe). As northern destinations are not normally associated with the term 'oasis', the catchphrase may have an eye-catching effect (provided it was given a more prominent position on the page), and the photographs may be said to offer a new interpretation of oasis based on Scandinavian design and scenery. In the context of the remainder of the text, the catchphrase, however, falls flat as there is nothing that underscores an experience of an oasis or of Europe. Describing Denmark as similar to, yet different from surrounding destinations may be seen as implicit benchmarking, and this is the closest the opening page gets to measuring Denmark against competitors. The catchphrase together with the photographs are, furthermore, characterised by implicit temporality in that they contain a promise of future relaxation (epitomised by the term 'oasis') and leisurely activity as opposed to the everyday humdrum life of the potential tourist. It is, however, up to the reader to arrive at these conclusions and he/she is not helped along, as in the investment website, by praiseful testimonials from former tourists to Denmark.

Turning to the visual content of the opening page, Figure 8 divides the photographs up into five themes:

- C naturescapes (mainly glimpses of sea, beaches, fields but also a few full-scale sceneries)
- C people (tourists engaged in leisurely activity or just being together)
- C design (personal and interior decoration, modern infrastructure and buildings)
- C food (traditional Danish dishes)
- C history (historic buildings)

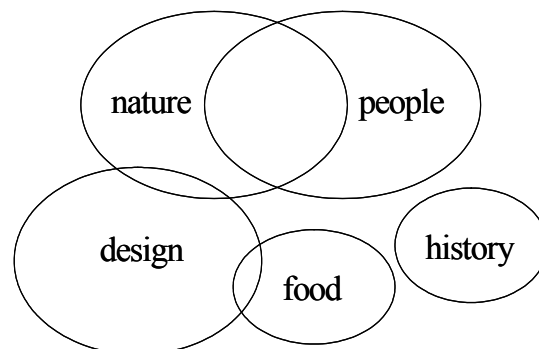


Figure 8 Visual themes in the DTB homepage, November 2003. The overlapping circles illustrate that two thematic elements characterize a given photograph and the size of the circles signifies the frequency with which a given theme occurs visually.

¹³ It does not, however, leave the communication very cogent that the potential tourist is alternately addressed as 'I' and 'you' in these two paragraphs.

¹⁴ In this connection it should also be mentioned that facilitating the choice of personally relevant information is a generic quality of website communication. Therefore it seems in the best case unnecessary and in the worst case condescending to give such a prominent position to rather trivial information.

Obviously the nature and people themes overlap in a substantial number of the photographs, whereas few or no overlaps occur between the remainder of the themes. The same two themes together with design are the most frequently occurring themes whereas food and history are present in a few but not very many photos. Except for design, these themes may be considered standard to the tourism promotion “genre” as such, because they show common activities that tourists engage in. Apart from breaking somewhat with the genre and thereby creating attention, the design theme, on a meta-level, also has the function of binding the visual side of the opening page together as the photographic technique of zoomed-in snapshots of parts of whole objects (hands peeling shrimps, legs dangling from a small bridge etc.) leaves the reader with an impression of a modern, artistic place.

Having a closer look at the way in which the object of desire is depicted, it appears that the assumptions about the subject (potential tourists) which inform this depiction rest on both exotic and friendly orientations towards other places. The people theme is characterised by people engaging in leisurely activity or just being together – there are no indications of the depicted people being locals representing the place. Compared to hectic every-day living of most people, time-to-spend and togetherness may be quite exotic (i.e. extraordinary), though it is rather a clichéd kind of exoticism, overexploited in tourism promotion, which does not set Denmark apart from competing destinations. The same seems to characterise the depiction of nature – it may have a feel of exoticism to it due to the urbanised living of most modern people, but uniqueness in comparison with competing places does not establish itself as the nature spots could be almost anywhere at least in Northern Europe. As opposed to the two former themes, the interior and industrial design belong to the everyday sphere of people’s lives which brings friendly imagery into play. The design theme may also entail a certain degree of distinction from other destinations, though other Scandinavian places can boast similar design traditions, and as Scandinavian countries are often lumped together by basically all non-Scandinavians, a promotional strategy focusing on this element may turn out problematic. The positive side to the Scandinavian design theme is, on the other hand, that it may be recognisable and create further associations in the minds of potential tourists.

On the basis of this analysis of visitdenmark.com, it would seem that the Danish Tourist Board pictures Denmark as a semi-exotic, but in many instances also like-home, place with few distinct features that sets Denmark apart from other destinations, particularly not other Scandinavian countries.

Elements of a Danish Umbrella Brand

The two analyses above have demonstrated a number of similarities and differences in the depictions of Denmark for investors and tourists respectively, and reflecting on these, the subsequent discussion will contemplate what elements could possibly constitute the foundation for a Danish umbrella brand.

Turning firstly to the textual elements of the two websites, it is obvious that both promotional agencies depict themselves as credible and competent assistants with reference to their official status. Their logos, however, communicate

different levels of 'officialness' as the state seal connotes more public authority than the heart-shaped flag-like logo. If the informal Danish mentality is to constitute one of the pillars in an umbrella brand, as will be discussed below, the state seal would not be a well-chosen logo. Whether the heart-shaped flag-like logo would contain sufficient uniqueness and eye-catching effect should, on the other hand, also be considered.

On both websites, potential investors and tourists respectively are cast in the role of the active subject who seeks customised information from the bulk of information made available to him or her. An individually oriented customer is hence envisaged and the impression of a place tuned into the demands of modern consumers materialises in both cases. That a strategy focusing on informing about practicalities seems to fare better in an investment than a tourism context should, however, be given serious attention in an umbrella branding initiative because extraordinary experiences to be had at a destination clearly have a pull-effect on tourists.

Moreover, the explicit measurements against competitors featured on investmentindk.com are not present on the tourism website, something which may be due to the different aspects of a place being central to tourists and investors respectively. Concrete factors like level of taxation, educational level, wage level are of primary importance to investors, and it is fairly easy to feature measurements that compare a variety of places on these factors, whereas it is difficult to measure the experiences to be had at a given tourism destination with those to be had at other destinations.

The visuals of the two websites also show some common and distinct traits. Some elements - business, food and people - are presently used functionally specific by IDK and DTB. Business activities and locations are only used on the IDK website and would only seem relevant for DTB to include if business tourist were deemed a target group equally important to holiday tourists. Conversely, food only appears on DTB's website – an element of primary importance to many tourist segments, but which could also be of importance, though only secondary, to future investors and business people going to Denmark. The people factor is used on both websites but in different manners: On the investment website the people featured appear both to be incoming business people engaging in work and off work activities and Danes who are part of the informal work settings; On the tourism website the depicted people seem only to be tourists engaged in leisurely activity which means that mentality characteristics of the locals are not exploited. Being of relevance to both investors and tourists, the local people would be an obvious element to include in an umbrella brand, and focusing on the informality of Danes would be appealing in both contexts and function as a differentiating factor in view of many competing locations.

Nature is given different functional priority on the two websites which is well in line with our prior theoretical deliberations. Nature and activities in nature are of primary importance to many types of tourists and this is featured in abundance on DTB's website, whereas the nature of a given place, unless essential for the given business activity, would hardly be a decisive reason for an investor's choice of place, and hence nature photographs have a secondary role

on IDK's website, being used to suggest Denmark as an uncongested place where expatriates could live and work close to wide open spaces.

History and design constitute the common ground of the two websites. History in the shape of historical townscapes are present on both websites but to no significant extent. In relation to investment where modern facilities and up-to-date know-how is high in demand, this priority is hardly surprising, whereas tourism is a context that normally exploits history way beyond what we witness here. Having obviously made the strategic choice that Denmark should be depicted as a modern place,¹⁵ DTB facilitates that common denominators with investment promotion can be found, and design is clearly the main overlapping element of the two promotional efforts. Though design is given a different twist – towards research, development and industrial design on the investment website and towards personal and interior decoration at the tourism website – the feeling of a modern society which gives priority to innovation and creativity materialises in both cases.

All in all, the elements that could constitute the foundation of a common branding platform for Danish tourism and investment promotion are design and informality as they combine elements of exoticism and friendliness into what may be termed exotic friendliness. Separately many places can boast design and informality, but the combination may be unique, but whether this constitutes an attractive selling point to both investors and tourists calls for further empirically based research.

4. Conclusion

Having investigated the prospects for developing national umbrella brands both from a general theoretical perspective and through an explorative study of the web-based promotion of Denmark to potential international tourists and investors, three types of conclusions have been reached.

The *theoretical* contribution of the paper centres on the characteristics of place branding - especially the importance of preconceived perceptions within the target group - and the implications of the different configurations of Self and Other associated with particular social activities. In brief, while being seen as exotic is important in branding for tourism purposes, coming across as a friendly, similar and positive, locality is central in a business context. At the same time it is, however, also clear that the possibility of constructing multi-functional umbrella brands should not be discounted because of possible synergies between the two forms of place branding. On the one hand, some degree of overlap between the positioning of Self and Other between the two functional areas investigated is also evident, especially because tourists rely on 'friendly'-type services with regard to accommodation and travel, but while the need of investors for exotic experiences may be more limited, it can still be argued that one of the attractions of expatriate living could be to uncover the discrete charms

¹⁵ This is a matter that, in fact, has coursed widespread discussions within the Danish tourism trade as the rural and coast regions of Denmark have difficulties in identifying their regions with this modern design-focused brand.

of the local mores as a form of 'exotic friendliness'. On the other hand, the scope for multiple interpretations of particular words and symbols is also evident, so that the ambiguity of particular imagery could be used as the foundation of a brand, and this implies positioning a locality internationally in relation to several functional target groups. From a theoretical perspective a national umbrella brand will in other words have to mediate between different functional requirements while still being able to associate a country with unique or superior qualities compared to its international competitors, a difficult but not necessarily impossible proposition.

In order to understand the delicate balancing act of umbrella branding, a *method* of empirical analysis is called for that is able to identify the positioning of Self and Other in promotional materials, not only in terms of normative evaluation but also with regard to the way in which differences and similarities are construed. Having elaborated an approach focusing on assumptional orders, its application to the case of Denmark indicates that this could indeed be a fruitful way to proceed. Furthermore, the results of the *empirical analysis* strongly suggesting that while it might be *possible* to build a Danish umbrella brand around notions like design/creativity, spaciousness and informality, these common features will still have to be applied in different functional contexts in order to function as competitiveness enhancing, let alone unique, selling points *vis-à-vis* international competitors.

Judging by the current state of the two promotional websites analysed here, there is still some way to go before potential synergies are fully explored, and whether this will eventually happen depends on the politics of umbrella branding, i.e. the inter-organisational conflicts about the profile of a future Denmark Brand. These contestations are likely to revolve around three sets of issues: the relative importance of the functional areas which are supposedly covered by the umbrella, the internal cohesion of each of these - not least an issue in tourism where the 'Danish product' is famously diverse - and the international positioning strategies of the organisations involved. Even if, in theory, it will be possible to construct a brand that could differentiate Denmark from its most important competitors in the international markets for both tourism and inward investment, such a venture would still require the development of an extensive consensus between key actors in two rather diverse policy areas, and given the frequent misgivings from important parts of the tourism industry about the image of Denmark promoted by the DTB, prospects would, at best, seem to be uncertain. Like other forms of politics, the ongoing contestation of the international branding of Denmark is, however, a dynamic and evolving process, and hence more detailed research into the process of brand creation will be necessary in order to determine the likelihood of the emergence of a, potentially efficient, Danish umbrella brand.

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